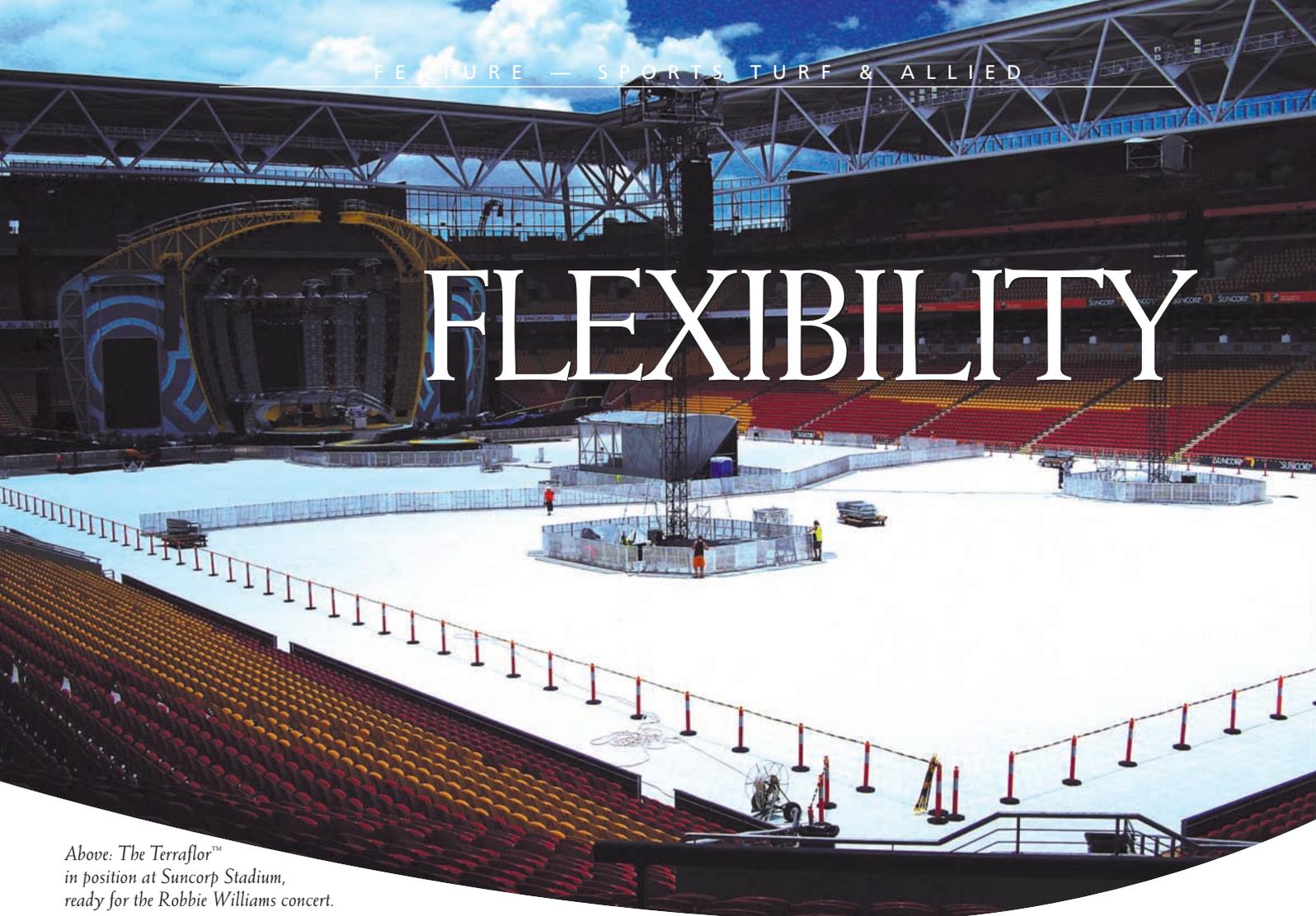


FLEXIBILITY



Above: The Terraflor™ in position at Suncorp Stadium, ready for the Robbie Williams concert.

Suncorp Stadium is Australia's largest, most modern facility dedicated to rugby — with Terraflor™ at its disposal, it can now host an array of events.

IMAGE COURTESY: HOK SPORT ARCHITECTURE

Feature-writer Simon Waterman reports on the recent successes of turf protection system, Terraflor™ — from world-renowned Terraplas plc.

Sports venue managers and event professionals no longer need to lose sleep over the possibility of damage being caused to their hallowed turf (albeit in some cases artificial) that lies beneath the financial well-being of their stadiums. The reason being that a unique solution called Terraflor® is now available and its primary purpose is to allay such worries. Not only is this system designed to protect a stadium's turf, but it also allows management the versatility of hosting many types of additional events that could not have otherwise been considered.

The Terraflor® system, which comes from the highly acclaimed stable of Terraplas solutions, is reputedly the leading natural turf protection product available on the market today. It already boasts many successful installations and is now making its mark around the world in destinations such as London, UK; Brisbane, Australia; the USA, from Los Angeles to New Jersey and; last but not least, at the golf course in Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein.

This feature examines the Terraflor® system with reference to its usage in the southern hemisphere, and in particular its partnership with Australia's Major Sports Facility Authority (MSFA).



GUARANTEED

Terraflor Specifications

So, what is the magic behind this solution that protects a venue's most valuable asset by limiting, if not eradicating, any damage to the turf when hosting other types of events? To answer this, we must begin with the basic specifications before moving on to look at specific venues that have already benefited from utilising the product.

Terraflor® began life undergoing extensive research and testing across three continents — the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. The system has now developed into an extremely versatile product, which can be utilised for a whole host of events and sporting occasions.

Terraflor® protection consists of panels made from high-density polyethylene, injection-moulded using a blowing agent. This produces an engineering quality, structural foam moulding, with a strength-enhancing cellular core. To put that (or rather it) firmly into perspective, you could land a helicopter on the panels without damaging them! They are also extremely durable and have a potential life expectancy of over fifteen years.

Each panel is extremely light, weighing only 30kg (66lbs). This enables installation personnel to lift panels easily and place them into position over the playing field very quickly. The panels basically fit together over the protected surface like a huge, simple jigsaw puzzle. Starting at one end of a playing field, each panel locks into neighbouring ones using a cam-lock system. Every panel measures 2.25m (7'5") x 1.5m (5') and is easily handled by two people.

A measure of Terraflor®'s versatility is demonstrated by the fact that it has been purchased or rented by many different types of stadiums and venues around the world. Its ever growing list of applications includes uses for walkways, exhibitions, and as flooring in marquees.

Major Sports Facilities Authority

As previously mentioned, the MSFA located in Queensland, Australia, recently purchased a Terraflor® system for their group of stadiums. They recognised that once

the Terraflor® protection is in place, their venues become 'multi-faceted', with many new possibilities and opportunities opening up.

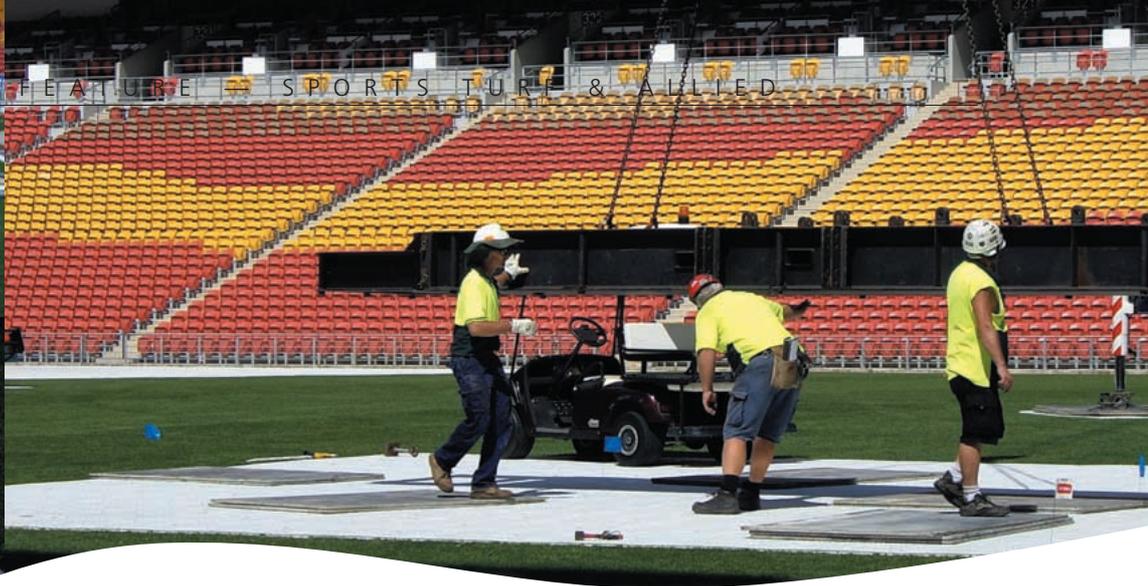
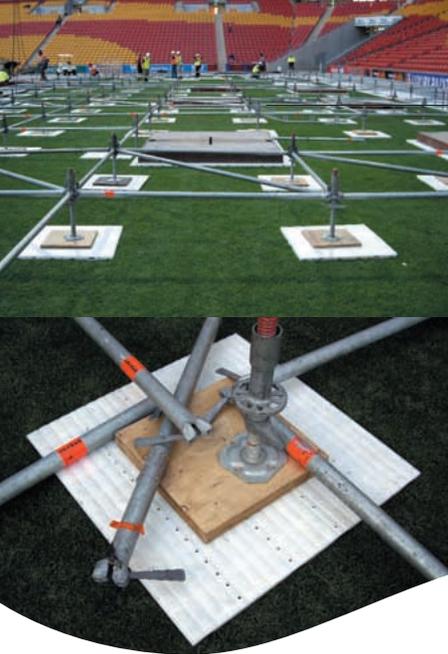
By taking a look at this important organisation and their reasons for choosing the Terraflor® system over the other systems available in the marketplace, we allowed an interesting insight.

Back in 2001, the Queensland Government established the Major Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) to oversee the future management of the State's major sporting venues. It was determined that some individual and smaller sporting trusts were struggling to remain financially viable, and the Government capitalised on the opportunity to save funds through sharing resources and management expertise. Previously, the MSFA's venues were administered through separate legislative regimes and governance structures. The Government believed that improved efficiencies could be achieved by establishing a single, integrated authority with the responsibility for managing Queensland's major sporting and entertainment venues.

On 21 December 2001, the Major Sports Facilities Authority Act (2001) was passed through Queensland Parliament and the MSFA was formed. It owns some of the most prestigious stadiums in Australia, which now have the opportunity to utilise the Terraflor® system.

Decision Made

When asked for their comments on the purchase and usage of the Terraflor® system, and in particular the benefits this has produced for their Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre (QSAC) and Suncorp Stadium venues, Peter Cronin, Grounds Manager for the MSFA advised as follows: "The Major Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA) purchased 11,500sqm of Terraflor® to protect the field of play areas at both the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre (QSAC — field of play area 109m x 72m) and Suncorp Stadium (field of play area 133.5m x 80.5m). This purchase allowed these facilities to operate as truly multi-purpose venues by hosting concerts and sporting fixtures with a short turnaround time between events."



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Each Terraflor™ panel is extremely light, weighing only 30kg (66lbs) — the panels basically fit together like a huge, simple jigsaw puzzle.

“QSAC comprises an elite athletes training facility for the Queensland Academy of Sport. In addition, the venue hosts a number of athletics events throughout the year. Suncorp Stadium has a twelve-month calendar of events, including Rugby League, Rugby Union and Soccer fixtures. It was duly important that any event involving the use of the field did not damage the playing surface, so as not to disrupt the regular events held at the stadia.

“The use of this product at both of these venues for concert events has left the field largely undamaged and in good condition. For the MSFA, this has opened up the possibility of increasing revenues flowing through the venue, due to the increase in the number of events, coupled with a substantial reduction in turf replacement costs. This benefits the operation of the stadia and hirers, as well as providing a boost for the local businesses surrounding the stadia who cater to patrons on event days, such as bars, clubs, restaurants and hotels.

“Additionally, in view of the ability to rent out the Terraflor® system to stadiums outside the MSFA group, and other facilities requiring turf protection, it is hoped that over a period of years our initial investment will be somewhat covered.”

Government Commitment

The MSFA was established to manage those facilities that had the capacity to stage national or international sports, recreational or entertainment events. To be placed under the control of the Authority, facilities had to be declared by regulation, through the Queensland Parliament, as a major sports facility. The objective was to avoid Government owned facilities competing with each other for events, resources and funding while, at the same time, being able to realise cost savings due to efficiencies created from having one overarching organisation, instead of a separate trust managing each.

Every one of the MSFA's venues are purpose-built and managed for the particular sport or activity they are intended. For example, the Gabba is a circular ground built to host the State's international and national cricket events during summer. In winter, the ground changes to become home ground to the Brisbane Lions Australian Football team. In comparison, Suncorp Stadium is a rectangular field, purpose-built for rugby league and union, which is played at the venue during the winter. In the summer, the venue hosts the home games of the Queensland Roar — the State's representative team in the National Soccer A-League competition.

Right Venue: Right Event

The upshot of this strategic approach to venue management is that when a hirer comes to Queensland, the MSFA can ensure they get the venue most suited to their event, because it manages all six facilities.

The economic return to the State of Queensland of hosting major international sporting events is substantial. However, having world-class facilities at your disposal is essential to attract these fixtures. For example, Suncorp Stadium hosted nine of the 2003 Rugby World Cup events (the most of any stadium in Australia) and attracted more than 500,000 patrons to the venue. The benefit to the Queensland economy was estimated to be in the region of AUD\$300m.

Queensland is rapidly gaining a strong reputation for its capacity to attract and host major international sporting events. The Goodwill Games, the Olympic Football tournament and the Honda Indy 300, are just a few examples where the State has had the opportunity to show the world the outstanding climate and location which exists for staging these events. The ability to attract these major international sporting events to Queensland is also dependent on the availability of world-class facilities.

The field at Suncorp Stadium immediately after the two-day Robbie Williams concert.

FLEXIBILITY GUARANTEED

MSFA Venues

Recognised as one of Australia's leading sports and entertainment venues, the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre (QSAC), located in Brisbane, has high aspirations of hosting the 2011 World Athletics Championships. No doubt the Terraflor® system would provide the perfect protection solution for the opening and closing ceremonies!

When asked for their insight into how the Terraflor® system performed at the QSAC, MSFA's representative, Peter Cronin, replied as follows: "The field protection surface [Terraflor®] was used for the first time at the U2 concert in November 2006 at QSAC. This venue has previously hosted such acts as The Rolling Stones, Elton John, Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen. No turf protection had been used at these events, often resulting in imprints in the turf where seating had been located — this being apparent during the following week's football match.

"However, following the U2 concert there was minimal damage to the field of play, allowing for soccer training to take place immediately following the 'bump out' [i.e. the removal of the stage and equipment etc]."

The new SKILLED Park at Robina on Brisbane's Gold Coast, which is currently under construction, is another venue in MSFA's portfolio. With a 25,000-seat capacity, it is anticipated that the stadium will be operational by 2008 and will be home to the new Gold Coast Titans National Rugby League team. There is no doubt that the Terraflor® system will be utilised at this venue upon completion.

Getting in on the Action

Another venue with the Terraflor® system at its disposal is the Gabba — formally known as Brisbane Cricket

Ground. This is the spiritual home of cricket in Queensland. Though the venue hosts the Queensland Bulls and the Australian National Cricket team during the summer months, in winter it turns to Aussie Rules football and is home ground to the Brisbane Lions Football Club.

Similarly, Suncorp Stadium has enjoyed great success with the Terraflor® system. It has a rich vein of history that quite literally runs deep, as it is located on a site that once held a cemetery. Indeed, the site was established by settlers in the late 1800s and became one of Brisbane's first urban areas. However, unlike the greedy real estate agent in the movie 'Poltergeist', all headstones and bodies were removed before the land was redeveloped!

Suncorp Stadium is a 52,500-seat, world-class, state-of-the-art venue, with the capability of hosting a whole range of events, including local and international rugby league, rugby union, Aussie Rules football, and outdoor concerts. Its cauldron-like design, and the proximity of its seating to the pitch, ensures that patrons enjoy a better view and atmosphere than ever before experienced in Queensland. Since the redeveloped venue opened in June 2003, more than three million patrons have attended events there.

This highly acclaimed stadium is the largest, most modern facility in Australia to be dedicated to rugby, yet courtesy of the Terraflor® product, it was possible for it to host a Robbie Williams concert on December 13th 2006. Tickets for the concert sold out in just over an hour, making it the venue's fastest selling event of any type, ever. In fact, the European leg of this Robbie Williams tour ended up in the 'Guinness Book of World Records' for selling an amazing 1.6 million concert tickets in one day!

With the imminent arrival of the British heartthrob, the stadium had to be totally transformed, as it is regularly used as home-turf by the Brisbane Lions Australian Rules football club. Essentially the turf had to be properly protected during concert mode as thousands of concert-goers were expected, and their trampling over the pitch would have potentially left it completely unplayable thereafter.

Stage is Set

When asked how easy it was to install and remove the Terraflor® system after certain events, in particular the recent U2 and Robbie Williams' concerts at the QSAC and Suncorp venues respectively. In addition to what effect, if any, the Terraflor® system had on the playing surface, MSFA's representative, Peter Cronin, advised:

"Terraflor® was used at QSAC for the U2 concert in November and also at Suncorp Stadium for two consecutive Robbie Williams shows in December 2006. No protection system had previously been used at QSAC and this had resulted in damage to the turf in the past as a result of major concerts.

"At Suncorp Stadium, the Robbie Williams concerts were the first since the redevelopment of the venue was completed in 2003. Previously there had not been any outdoor concerts allowed due to the conditions of use attached to the development approval. This venue had only been used for sports, including Rugby League, Rugby Union and Soccer.

"The system was installed three days before the U2 concert, allowing for the 'bump-in' [build up] of the stage and concert infrastructure. The Terraflor® was down for a period of five days and was removed in

around six hours. Some 21,000 patrons were on the field of play during the concert and the surface remained unaffected. Soccer training was held at the venue on the following day.

"Similarly, at Suncorp Stadium some 17,000 patrons were on the field of play for two consecutive shows. The Terraflor® was laid in around eighteen hours, four days before the concert. It was down for a total of eight days and was removed following the second concert in around ten hours.

"Despite the heat and humidity at both of the concerts the playing surfaces were not adversely affected. No safety issues were reported by any of the patrons on the fields, and no turf was damaged or lost as a result of the surfaces being covered."

True Multi-Functionality

The benefits of the Terraflor® system can clearly be seen by everyone involved. It's almost like the perfect marriage... and just like a perfect marriage we have to give the final word to the wife, or in this case the MSFA's Peter Cronin, on his final thoughts on the Terraflor® system and what it does for their organisation and venues? The system provides the venues of the MSFA with the ability to host an array of different events, whether they be concerts, music festivals or car shows, all in addition to its regular sporting fixtures.

"This will allow MSFA venues to pursue major events in the future without having concerns over damage to the field of play. This is not only good news commercially, it is also excellent news for the operation and maintenance departments, who have to handle these extra events without affecting the quality of the playing surface provided to the sporting events." ✨

Close-up of the field at Suncorp Stadium post-concert, thanks to Terraflor™.

